

THE BAKES
AND
THE OLD CASTLE

JOHN SCHMIDT



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To dear Jennie wishing her
a Happy Birthday. Love
Louie.

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THE CAKES; THE DAISY;
The Old Castle;

AND

THE DIAMOND RING.

BY

CHRISTOPHER VON SCHMID,
CANON OF AUGSBURG.

Translated from the German

BY THE LATE

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Dublin:

JAMES DUFFY AND SONS,
15 WELLINGTON QUAY;
AND 1 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.

PRICE SIXPENCE.

THE CAKES.

YOUNG FRED, a gay lively boy about ten years old, was the son of the woodranger at Grunenthal. His father received a letter one morning, which he was to carry from Herr von Grunenthal to Rauhenstein, a castle that lay beyond very high mountains, and in the heart of a thick forest.

"It will be a hard journey," said the father, "especially as the hurt I got the other day in the foot, when we were hunting, is not yet healed. The journey will take full three hours. But since our good master orders, I must obey."

"Give the letter to me, father," said Fred, offering his services. "The whole road, I know goes through a forest, but it will not be heavy for me. I know it well from this to our own bounds, and can easily find out the rest of it, and safely give the letter into the hands of Mr. von Rauhenstein."

"Into his own hands, and to no other, you will give the letter," said the father; "you know him well. There is a large sum of money in the letter; perhaps you may get something for your trouble." He then described the road for Fred, from their own bounds to Rauhenstein.

The little fellow buckled on his hunting pouch, and slinging his piece over his shoulder, started on his journey.

He arrived safe at the castle, and told the ser-

vants, that by orders, he was bound to deliver the letter into the master's own hand. The servant led him up the broad stone steps, into a splendid apartment, where von Rauhenstein was engaged with a party of officers at the card table. Fred made his best bow to the gentlemen, and delivered his letter, in which, it appeared, there were one hundred gold pieces. Mr. von Rauhenstein went to his writing desk, and scrawled a few lines, acknowledging the receipt of the money. "All right," said he, sitting down in a hurry to the card table. "You can retire now—no other answer is required—it will follow you."

With a heavy heart poor Fred returned down the broad stone stairs; for he was hungry and thirsty, and heartily tired. But as he was passing through the court, he was met by the cook, who was coming out of the garden, with a large knife in one hand, and cauliflowers in the other. She knew by the poor boy's face, the state of his feelings.

"Come with me, little forester," said she, kindly, "and I will give you some bread and a drink of good beer. You would not be able for your journey—you are far from home—and there is not a single house on the way. You must not take it ill of our master, that he offered you nothing: he does not mind those things himself; but he allows us to give something to persons in your state."

The cook brought Fred into the kitchen, where the large fire was blazing on the hearth. "Lay aside your pouch and fowling-piece and sit down here," said she, pointing to a little table in the corner of the kitchen. There she gave him plenty of soup and meat, vegetables and bread, and a small pot of beer. Fred thought he had never been feasted so sumptuously. He was refreshed and ready for his journey: but before he started

he said, one hundred times, at least, "God reward you," to the cook, and that, too, with as much reverence as if she had been the lady of the castle. He would have even kissed her hand, had she allowed him.

Happy as a prince, Fred set out on his journey. But when he had been nearly a half hour on the road, he saw a squirrel in an open space in the forest. The little animal was a perfect stranger to him, for he had never seen any of them in the forest of Grunenthal. Fred was very young, and, perhaps, the good beer had got into his head, but, at all events, he resolved to take the squirrel alive. He flung a piece of a rotten bough at the little animal, and started in full chase, from oak to oak, into the depths of the black forest, where he lost sight of his game, and what was much more serious, lost the road. He wandered about during the rest of the day, and half the succeeding night, through the thick forest, till, at last, sinking under hunger and fatigue, he flung himself down on some brambles and fell into a troubled sleep. He rose in the morning, more faint than he had before lay down. He looked around, and advanced he knew not whither. The place was utterly unknown to him. The wild deer, starting up and bounding off in terror when they saw him, convinced him that he must be in the heart of some unfrequented wood. A herd of swine crossed his path, and among them a huge boar, which bristled its neck, and grunted, and skinned its teeth at him, and made the poor boy scream in agony, and fly for his life. He continued to wander about until noonday, when, unable to move farther, he tottered and fell exhausted to the ground. He cried and called as loud as he could, but there was no answer except the echo of his voice in the silent forest. He could not get a berry or a drop of water to quench his thirst.

There he lay faint and despairing at the foot of a pine tree. He earnestly prayed to God not to desert him. He took his pouch to get, if possible, a few crumbs of the bread which he had brought with him from home, and eaten on the road to Rauhenstein. But what was his joy—his rapture, on finding a large piece of a cake and some fine rich pears. "Oh! said he, "it was the cook put these here, without my knowledge." The poor boy shed tears of gratitude and resolved that he would be always charitable to the needy, especially if they were strangers; and also that if ever he were rich enough, he certainly would not forget that kindness of the good cook. "Under God," said he, "it was she that saved my life. If she had not given the cake and pears, I never could get out of this forest alive."

Standing up with refreshed strength and better courage, he moved onwards once more. He walked on in the direction of Grunenthal, as well as he could judge by the position of the sun, and after having worked his way for more than an hour, he heard the cheering sounds of the woodman's axe in the distance. Hurrying on in the direction of the sounds, he found two men cutting down a large pine tree. They pointed out the road to Grunenthal, where he arrived safely to the great joy of his parents, who had been dreadfully alarmed on his account.

His father reproved him severely, and gave him good advice. "Thus it is," said he, among other things, "when men allow themselves to be drawn away from the right road to follow their pleasures. You might have perished in that wild wood far from your father's house, without the poor consolation even of catching that squirrel. Our way through life is like a road through a wild forest, where pleasures, like ferocious animals, lie in wait to

destroy us, if we are tempted from the right path. As I told you the road through the forest, so does God point out to us in his commandments the right path, in our pilgrimage through this world. Let no earthly pleasure ever seduce you to the right or the left from the way of virtue. One false step might ruin you for ever, and prevent you from entering your true Father's house beyond the grave."

"The love of pleasure," he continued, "perverts the heart of man, and makes him insensible to noble and generous feelings. Mr. von Rauhenstein, with whom you are so much displeased, is not a bad man. But he was so much taken up with his play, that he never thought either of giving you some refreshment, though you stood so much in need of it, or some money, though the hundredth part of what he had staked that morning, would have sent you home as happy as a prince. Do you guard yourself against that, which displeases you so much in another; let your pleasure or your own will never engage you, so as to make you insensible to the wants and happiness of others. Imitate whatever you find good in others; be ever as kind and generous to all men, as Rosalie, the cook, was to you in the castle of Rauhenstein."

Fred was a good forester, faithful and true to his employer, open and generous to all, and without one stain on his good name. But he was particularly remarkable for his kindness and charity to travellers and the poor. He never forgot Rosalie's kindness. He went to the castle one time, to tell her how much she had done for him, but she had left the service, and no person could give him any account of her. From that day forward he never got any intelligence of his kind benefactress.

In the course of some years, Fred was promoted

for his integrity and intelligence to the office of chief huntsman under the king's woodranger, and afterwards was made forester of Tannek, one of the most lucrative posts in the gift of his master. After his marriage, he often told his wife, who was as good as himself, of many adventures of his boyish days, and especially how he had been saved from certain death in the forest by the kindness of Rosalie. They resolved that since they could not find her, they would prove their sense of her goodness, by as liberal charity to travellers and the poor, as their means allowed. They had a good opportunity of indulging their charitable dispositions, as the forester's lodge, in which they lived, lay on the border of the forest near the high road.

Fred's wife went one very sultry day to bring a glass of water from the well. There she found a poor woman sitting on the bench, which her husband had made under the shady pines, near the well, for the accommodation of travellers. The strange woman, though clean and neatly dressed, was evidently poor, and appeared very tired and unhappy. A wicker basket and her walking-stick lay near her on the bench. Struck by the mild and woe-be-gone expression of her countenance, Fred's wife saluted her cordially, and invited her to the lodge to take some refreshment. The offer was gratefully accepted, and after the poor woman had taken some bread and beer, she and her host became so happy together, that the stranger told the whole history of what was weighing so heavy on her heart.

"I live," said she, "about twelve leagues from this. My husband is a gunsmith, and was able to earn a good deal of money by muskets, pistols, and other fire-arms. He worked day and night, so that we were able not only to support ourselves and the two children with whom heaven has

blessed us, but also to lay aside some provision for the future. But latterly it has been the will of God to send us many hard trials. My husband's hand was hurt so severely by a musket he was trying, that he has not been able to work during the last year. The war then came down on us and stripped us of the greater part of our property. The doctor's bill still continued a heavy drain, and as we had no money coming in, we were badly able to meet it—but, to crown all our misfortunes, we lost our only cow by the murrain. We had already raised money on the credit of our lands and house, and had no means left of replacing our cow, as the neighbours would not lend the money. Without a cow we could not live: so I resolved to undertake a long journey to my brother, hoping that he would give the money. I did make that long journey, and I am now on my way home. I told him my hard case, and begged his help. Twenty or thirty crowns would have bought a cow for me. My brother was willing enough to help me, but his wife would not allow him to give me a penny. She was displeased with me, she said, because I married a man who had no property. All I got was a small sum, that my brother slipped secretly into my hand, but it will hardly cover half the expenses of my journey. But it was all the pocket money he had then at his disposal. Ah!" said she, "I pity my brother, and still more, my poor husband and children. They are anxiously praying for my return, and expecting some help: what a grief it will be to them, when I meet them with empty hands."

At this moment the forester was returning home, with his bag well stocked with game. He saluted the poor stranger kindly. His wife told him how she had invited her to come in, and what a melancholy tale had just been told.

"Right, right, Dora," said Fred, "it makes my heart glad, to see you acting as I would, consoling the poor stranger, and giving her share of what God has given to us. Generosity, especially to strangers and travellers, is a most sacred duty."

"And good reason I have to say so," said he, taking a chair and sitting down near the woman, while his wife placed a glass of ale on the table before him. He then told his boyish adventure in the forest, and how he had been saved from certain death, by the kindness of Rosalie, the good cook of Rauhenstein.

"Good God!" exclaimed Rosalie, clasping her hands, "I am that cook. Rosalie is my name. Frederic is your's—and your father was forester of Grunenthal. I can tell you some particulars you omitted in your story. It was green peas I gave you with the soup and roast meat—and the beer glass had a pewter cover, with a stag stamped on it, which particularly struck your fancy. You were very much displeased with Mr. von Rauhenstein, and remarked that he was true to his name, but I told you he was a better man than he appeared to be. Words cannot tell how happy I am, that the bit of cake saved your life, and that I see you now so happy and independent. Wonderful are the ways of God—I could never recognise you. The slender, little forester is now grown an able and fine looking man. God's blessing has been on you—as everything around me shows."

The forester now expressed his joy on meeting his old friend, and bade her a thousand welcomes. "I thought I knew you," said he, "when I met you first, but I could not distinctly remember who you were or where I saw you. The thought struck me, that you might be my friend Rosalie, though time had made some change in you. To be sure of the fact, I told you my adventure in the

forest. God be praised! I have found you at last. I am the happiest man under the sun—You must not stir this day. Come, Dora,—the best in your kitchen and cellar for our friend."

Rosalie pressed hard to be allowed to depart. "To-morrow morning I must be at home," said she. "I will walk a few leagues in the cool of the evening—the twelve leagues would be too long a journey for to-morrow."

"That matter can be easily managed," said Fred. "I will yoke my pony to-morrow, and drive you in my light waggon as far as you like. I will drive you to your own door, if I am not obliged to attend the prince, with the hunting party that are on a visit with him."

Fred's wife was as happy as himself, on finding Rosalie. There was no resisting their united entreaties. She consented to stop that night. The hostess prepared a dinner in her best style, and produced at the dessert a large cake, prepared in the same way as that which Rosalie had given to Fred. It was wreathed with garlands of the most beautiful flowers, and in the centre, the words "To gratitude," were formed with white sugar in imitation of pearls.

"Oh!" said Rosalie, "don't put the knife in that beautiful cake. I have dined so heartily I will not touch it."

"Very well," said the hostess, "but you must put the cake in your basket, and bring it home in the morning to your children."

Fred had ordered his best wine from the cellar; and he and his wife drank to the health and happiness of Rosalie and her family. "We are bound to do so," said he: "were it not for you, this house, where I and my Dorothy are so happy, would have other tenants."

Next morning, at break of day. Fred was busy

preparing to escort his old friend to her family. His wife had a good breakfast on the table; and when all was ready, she put the large cake into Rosalie's basket, together with other provisions for the road, and some few presents for the children. Fred accompanied Rosalie half the journey. When he took his affectionate leave of her, he promised to visit herself and family as soon as possible, and get his fire arms repaired by her husband,—a promise which he faithfully performed.

Rosalie continued her journey in good spirits. When she approached her house, she saw her two children, William and Theresa, advancing on the road to meet her. When they saw her, they sprung forward with joyful cries, and asked what she had in the basket. "O wait until we go home," said she, "we must not be so impatient and curious.

Her husband met her at the door, and all entered together. Rosalie told the hard reception she had got from her sister-in-law, and also announced the sad news, that she brought home no money. Her husband was sadly disappointed; nor could all she said of the happy night she spent with the forester, dispel his gloom. Rosalie opened her basket, and produced the cake. The sight of it made the children forget all their sorrows; but when the father saw them clapping their hands, and loudly expressing their joy, he could scarcely repress his tears.

"What good is the cake," said he, "where are we to get twenty or thirty gilders, to buy a cow?"

But lo—when the mother tried to cut the cake for the children, the knife stuck so fast in it, that all her strength could not divide it.

"This is an odd cake," said she; "it must have

been baked too much." She broke the crust—and the first thing that met her eye, were two thalers of gold—and below them, in order, a dozen others of the same value.

Fred's joy on finding the cake in his pouch, was not greater than her's when she saw the glittering coin. "Gracious heaven," said she, "Frederic told his wife to put them in the cake, to enable us to buy a cow, and to raise us from poverty."

"The gold is worth thirty-two gilders and some crowns," said little William, who was learning his table of coin in school; "it will buy a fine cow for us."

"And then we can have milk and butter again," said Theresa, hopping about and clapping her hands."

The father's face brightened, and with fervent heart he thanked God for the favour. "That cake which you gave, many years ago, to the little boy," said he, "was capital well laid out; it has been paid back, one hundred thousand fold."

"Yes," said the mother, "and the smallest act of kindness, to one of our brethren, will be much more amply rewarded in heaven."

"O, my children," adds the father, "let us be always merciful, that we may obtain mercy."

THE DAISY.

MRS. BERTHOLD, an intelligent and prudent woman, was standing, on Sunday evening, at the gate of her field, near her native town. Her little daughter, Mary, dressed in white, her neat straw bonnet on her head, was with her. It was a beautiful evening in spring. The field was clothed in deep green verdure, interspersed with some of the first flowers of the year.

"How clear and blue the sky is this evening," said Mary, "how green the field, bespangled all over with those little white flowers, like stars in the sky. Just as the blue heavens glitter with golden stars, so every part of the field is painted with flowers. How beautiful, beautiful indeed, has God made all things." Plucking a few of the flowers, Mary remarked, "They are very pretty—the inner part is of a bright, beautiful yellow, and the delicate white leaves stream from the centre like rays of light. O, see, dear mother, the ends of the leaves are tipped with red. The cup of the flower is white or green, and round as a pearl. We call these 'field flowers.' But why not call every flower that grows in the field, field flowers? Have these no other name?"

"O yes," answered the mother, "we call them, sometimes, 'common flowers,' because you can scarcely find a spot in which they do not grow ;

they are called 'month flowers,' because there are few months of the year, in which they are not to be found; they appear when the earth is wrapped in ice and snow. They are also called 'gooseflowers,' perhaps, because their tender green leaves are the favourite food of the young geese: but their more general name is 'modest darling.'"

"Modest darling," said Mary, "that's a singular name. Tell me, dear mother, why they got that name? what does it mean?"

"I am not quite certain," answered the mother, "whether I can tell you. But I think those modest little flowers, got the name from their simple and artless, yet agreeable and pleasing ornaments. Thus in everything, but particularly in ornaments, we praise simple elegance. These flowers have no other ornaments to strike the eye, than yellow and white colours, and a slight tinge of red, and yet they are pretty; just like yourself now, with your yellow straw bonnet and white dress, and the three knots of light red ribbons. This modest attire becomes you much better than gaudy colours. I hope that in your dress, as well as in everything else, you may ever study modesty. Do be always a modest darling."

"We have no flowers in our garden at home," said Mary, "nothing but vegetables. Suppose I brought home some of these flowers, and planted them in that little bed that you gave to my care?"

"Why not?" answered the mother. "Do so immediately. These flowers can be very useful. The green leaves can be mixed with our salads and spinach. They are good, too, as medicine. A friend of mine, who, it was supposed, had some disease of the lungs, was cured, she told me, by those leaves. This flower plant combines the

useful with the agreeable. Would that we could always do the same."

Next day Mary went to the field, and dug up many of the plants that had not yet flowered. She set them, like cabbage plants, in rows on the plot, which her mother had given to her. The soil was very rich; Mary attended them carefully. She often stirred the earth around them, and plucked up any grass or weeds that might withdraw the nourishment from them; and, except in rainy weather, she never forgot to water them.

When the buds appeared, and the flowers at last opened, Mary was not a little amazed. They were far superior to the flowers in the field. The little white leaves that surrounded the yellow, did not appear; and what was formerly the yellow disk, was now of a dark or a lighter red, apparently composed of innumerable tender tubes.

Mary ran to her mother. "O, come!" said she, "and see what a miracle my flowers are. You could scarcely know them, they are so changed."

The mother followed her. "Is it not true now!" exclaimed Mary; "are not they like velvet?"

"They are, indeed," answered the mother; "they are like velvet; and that's the reason flowers of that kind, when improved by cultivation, are called, in some places, velvet flowers. See what a change, care and cultivation can make even in a very common flower."

Mary was so delighted with this metamorphosis of the modest darling into the velvet flower, that she brought home from the field as many roots as covered all her little plot in the garden. But another wonder now struck her. The flowers began to blow, and lo! when they were in full bloom, the yellow disk had disappeared. The whole flower was covered with those tender leaves,

but of different colours, some white as snow, others dark, others light red, and, at a little distance, all looked like beautiful little tubes.

Mary, after remarking the flowers one morning, ran to her mother. "O, mother, come!" said she, "and see the new miracle in my flowers. Come, come, where I planted my common daisies. I have a thousand different kind of flowers."

"Very possible," answered the mother; "that's the reason these flowers are sometimes called, 'Thousand hues.' This discovery is not so new as you think. Many florists have before you, improved the daisy in this way. They are now to be found in almost every flower garden."

"And thus," continued the mother, "can we by industry and care, develop and perfect everything in nature. What is done with these flowers, can be done with most other flowers and fruits. Some of the most beautiful flowers of the garden were, in the beginning, flowers of the field; the best apple and pear trees were, at first, only crabs and wildings. This is the reward God gives to the industry and perseverance of man; thus it is that He makes man the lord of creation.

"Man himself," she said, "never attains his full and due perfection, but by a sound and religious education. The pity is, that many children are not so pliant as these humble flowers; yes, and that many—many more, by their obstinacy and disobedience, frustrate and nullify the best education. Learn you, my child, to set a due value on that education, which I am endeavouring to give you; do, co-operate with me, that it may be crowned with richest fruit."

Mary's flowers flourished under her care; her little bed, on which she now planted nothing else, was soon covered thick with green leaves, and

looked like a pasture field. She thought they required no more care, and allowed them to grow as they pleased. But she was soon surprised, not however so agreeably as before, to find that her richest flowers and her thousand dies, dwindled and degenerated once more into common daisies.

"Ah! this is too bad," said Mary; "I never expected to be so sadly disappointed in flowers, that once made me so happy. Tell me, dear mother, what can be the cause of this sad change?"

"The cause," said the mother, "is easily explained. The first cause is, you have neglected your flowers; you took no care of them except to manure the earth around them; you forgot to water them; you allowed them to be overrun with grass and weeds. That's the reason they are now like what they were in the open field. Nothing but constant care can keep the wild flower from degenerating; without care, they once more grow wild.

"And so it is in the education of man. How good soever the education, or however great the promise of youth, if the good work be not continued, the hope is blasted. Let it not depress you if I tell you, that I see many things in you which I must correct, and amend, and guard you against. Since you planted the flowers in our garden, you are older, and bigger, and more prudent, and pious also. But as yet, you stand in need of constant watchfulness, and careful direction. Be ever obedient to me, that you may never, like these poor flowers, fall away from your virtue.

"Another cause why these flowers have fallen away is this: near your little plot, I left one plot of grass, to bleach my yarn and linen. The wild daisy grew thick on that plot. Now, experienced

gardeners are of opinion, that the proximity of the wild flower is injurious to those that have been improved ; that they bring them back, in a word, by degrees, to their natural state. Now, this should be a warning to us, to avoid the society of evil men, unless we wish to become like to them. Evil communication corrupts good morals.

"See, my dear Mary, what beautiful, what striking lessons God conveys to us in the inanimate world, if we do but study it with an attentive eye, and desire to discover them, with the intention of practising them "

Mary once more took care of her flowers ; removed the wild daisies from the grass plot, and lo, her flowers, which she called her little foster-children, improved once more, and grew every year more beautiful.

But Mary herself was ever obedient to the voice of her mother, and never defeated those motherly instructions by levity or obstinacy ; she avoided all bad company. She was a truly virtuous young girl, more beautiful and promising than the fairest of her flowers.

Mary felt deeply the great value of the education which her mother had given to her. On her mother's feast-day, Mary conducted her to a green spot in the garden, on which the mother's name appeared in letters made of red, white, or rose coloured velvet flowers, growing and planted by Mary's own hand. "Dear mother," she said, "you have had much more trouble with me, than I ever had with these flowers. They have amply repaid my care and labour, could I be less grateful ? Accept, then, this little acknowledgment of my gratitude, for your great labours."

This modest and pretty acknowledgment from a grateful daughter, was, of course, most agreeable to the mother. "Now, dear Mary," said she, "in

honour of you, we shall call these flowers henceforward 'Mary flowers.' "

"No, no," said the daughter, "it must be your name ; look, it is growing there—'Margaret.' "

From that day forward, the mother always called the flowers, "Mary flowers ;" but the daughter would not consent, and to the day of her death, as many persons after her, called them nothing else but "Margaret flowers.

THE OLD CASTLE.

CHAPTER I.

THE COLLIER'S FAMILY.

DEEP in the bosom of the mountains lived Rupert, an honest collier. His wooden hut was perched on the top of a rock, at the end of a narrow green valley. A small stream, clear as crystal, watered the vale; but at times it was swollen to a fearful height, and foamed over its rough bed, sweeping along with it, large masses of rock and broken trees. The country around was a frightful wilderness. Wooded mountains locked up the valley at one side, and high over the conical tops of the fir and pine, snow clad rocks shot up their pinnacles to the skies. No trace of the hand of man was seen, save the wooden huts of the colliers, a few steps hewn in the rocks, and a plank thrown across the stream.

At a little distance from the hut there was an old quarry, where variegated rocks contrasted beautifully with the green leaves that almost shaded them, and beyond, in the distance, a mouldering tower stood on the top of a mountain, near the ruins of an old fortress.

Here in this deep solitude, Rupert lived with his wife Hedwiga, and their two children, Nicholas

and Theckla. Several weeks often passed without bringing a single stranger to the valley, which was tenanted exclusively by the hare and roe, and sometimes by the stag, which ventured down from the woods to the stream, in the noon-day heat.

Rupert was always busy in the forest, felling wood and burning charcoal. Hedwiga took care of the house, and constantly plied her wheel. Nicholas tended the flock of mountain goats; and Theckla had charge of a dozen of sheep, which she kept in the little green vale, or in grassy spots on the mountain's side. The little family lived in peace and piety, and desired no greater happiness than what they enjoyed. The children believed that no place could be more beautiful than the bleak wilderness around them. To them, rocks and forests were the world. In them they were taught by their pious parents, to behold the grandeur and majesty of God. The wild strawberry and the red or black berries on the heath, were their delight. Whenever they happened to pick up a solitary wild flower, the purple fox-glove, or the dark blue monk's hood, for example, they brought them to their parents, who warned them that they were poisonous. The beautiful crimson fruit that grew like little caps on the spindle tree, or the acorns in their green cups, were a source of more amusement to these poor children, than the most costly play-toys of the rich. The little stream, whose banks the children had planted with flowers, supplied trout in abundance, and of such excellent quality, that many a rich man might envy Rupert's table.

Many beautiful crystallizations were to be found in the neighbouring quarry. Several stones of yellow slate clay, were perfect images of herbs, leaves, and flowers. Nicholas often drove his

goats in that direction; and selecting the most beautiful stones, brought them home, and, after some time, made a splendid collection. Travellers, who came occasionally to the mountains, purchased them from Nicholas, who, however, always gave the money to his father.

Nicholas was never so happy as when, after driving home his goats, he went to his father in the forest, and spent the night with him in the pine hut, near the blazing pile of wood. This spot commanded a beautiful view of the old mountain castle. When the sun was going down and the pines around looked dark and gloomy, the old tower gleamed like gold in the evening rays.

"I am very curious," said Nicholas, one evening, "to know that old castle. Some time, when I drive my goats in that direction, I must go to the top of the mountain and get a full view of the old ruin."

The father raised his hand in a warning attitude. "Do not, Nicholas," said he; "the old walls are tottering: some accident might happen to you."

"But what, or who, destroyed the fine castle?" asked Nicholas.

The father then told some frightful stories of a wicked baron, who had once tenanted the hold. Poor Nicholas trembled from head to foot, when he heard how the wicked robber plundered the country round, and lived like the rich glutton until the measure of his iniquity was full; and how, at last, he was taken and died by the sword, and his castle was dismantled and given up to the flames.

At the close of this history the father added: "See how the world goes! crime cannot stand; like the grass on those dry walls, it withers and disappears. God punishes all crime. Had that baron been a good man his castle might be standing

this day in all its splendour, and tenanted by his descendants. But now the solitary tower rising over the ruins, is to us, and to all time, a monument of God's vengeance."

CHAPTER II.

THE YOUNG FOX.

ONE day Nicholas was driving his goats to the quarry. While they were browsing on the leaves and brambles, he was picking spars. He thought he heard some sound like the yelping of a dog, and having looked around on every side, he found a young fox in a cleft of the rock, striving, but in vain, to jump up the steep sides of his prison.

Nicholas pitied the poor animal, and taking a small trunk of withered pine, he used it as a ladder, and clambering down to the luckless fox, carried it up in his arms and brought it home to his father.

"Oh, Nicky," said his sister, "where did you get that strange young dog?"

"It's a young fox," said the father, "only a few months old. The poor animal is very weak and half starved."

Nicholas told how he caught it. "No wonder," said the father, "that it should be so lank. It was well done on your part, to take pity on the unfortunate creature." The mother then produced a dish of goat's milk, which the fox lapped greedily to the last drop.

"You can keep the fox and rear it," said the father, "it will be one additional mouth to provide for: but something is always left for a lad of that kind." The fox was never absent at meal times, he

learned to eat everything, and became as fond of the house as if it were his own. But Nicholas was his principal patron. He fed him well, and the poor animal repaid this kindness, by playing with him and following him everywhere like a dog.

But the fox soon developed his plundering nature. He stole a hen from Hedwiga, and plucked and eat it in a bush behind the hut. She caught him in the fact, and screamed and called for help. The father was for shooting the thief on the spot. But Nicholas wept and prayed that the wretch's life would be spared. "Well, let him live," said the father, "but send him off quickly."

Next day the smith came with a waggon from the next village, to bring home charcoal. He took a great fancy to the fox. "My boys would have great sport with him," he said. As Nicholas was not allowed to keep him, he gave him to the smith, who promised to bring something good in return, and, tying a cord around the fox's neck, he led him away with his waggon. The poor animal often looked back, and was very unwilling to go with his new master. Nicholas stood at the door crying, and continued long, gazing sorrowfully for his frisky and faithful companion.

"Let him go," said the father: "he deserved it. The thief deserved the rope. Should you ever steal, or do any wicked act, out of my house you should go, dear as you are to me, and the rope would be your neck cloth at last."

Nicholas forgot his fox, and wandered once more happy and content on his native mountains. One day he had his goats feeding near the old castle. When he was preparing to return in the evening, he missed one of them. He searched every place, and clambered over high and craggy rocks. "Perhaps," thought he, "it has gone into the old castle." At the moment, he felt a great curiosity to know

all about that old castle, which was the wonder of the whole country around. True—he remembered his father's warning. But he said, "it could not be so dangerous; I will only go in for a moment."

The old gate was a complete ruin. Nicholas wandered about through moss covered walls, blocks of hewn stone, strewn around in disorder, and brambles and trees that had grown over the ruins. Immense shafts of pine and oak, shot up from the pile of rubbish. Nicholas gazed with awe on the massive tower, whose rent walls were overgrown with ivy and brambles. He entered the tower through a low, narrow door. Even the interior was covered with brambles, moss covered stones lay around him, and the long dry grass hung down in wreathes from the crumbling walls. A thrill of horror shot through his frame, as he gazed around, "My God," he exclaimed, "my father was right, crime cannot stand, it disappears like the withered grass on the wall." A chill came over him, he felt it creeping over his body, he was turning round to go out, but suddenly, all the brambles around, began to shake and nod towards him: a tremendous crash followed; the ground opened under his feet, and stones and brambles tumbled over him into a chasm as deep as a draw well.

It was a subterranean prison, whose crumbling vault had given way under Nicholas. He was half dead with the fright, though he had received no other injury. But to his horror, he soon discovered, that he could never clamber up the straight walls. The agony of death appeared to seize him. Toads and adders, that had nestled in between the loose stones and roots of the trees, were hissing and writhing around him. This was the most terrible danger; he screamed again and again for help, but the echo of his voice died away under the arches

of the ruin, and left him again in gloomy and death-like silence.

Weeping and wringing his hands he sat down in the rubbish, and looked up wistfully to the clear blue sky, through the cleft in the vault and the overhanging brambles. The sky, he thought, never looked so fair. "Oh! Thou great and good God," he cried, "who reignest there alone; no mortal hears my voice; Thou alone hearest me, no man knows that I am here; Thou seest me! Oh! have mercy on me; let me not perish in this frightful pit: pardon my disobedience of my father's orders. During my life, I will obey my parents, and be ever thankful to Thee." Thus he prayed and wept.

Darkness was now coming on by degrees. Night came and no relief. In the small part of the heavens that was visible, an occasional star flickered and disappeared. The pale moonlight, streaming through the shattered windows, and lighting up the interior of the great tower, played on the grey walls, and faintly brightened the gloom. But suddenly he hears a horrible scream. Hollow sepulchral howling resounded through the lonesome ruin. Black figures flitted to and fro over his head in the tower. To know what they were—was impossible, but the uncertainty was his greatest torment. His whole frame shook with terror. He shut his eyes; drops of cold sweat stood on his forehead; he remembered all the horrible ghost stories, which he had often heard of this castle. "Oh, God,—my God,"—he prayed with all the strength of his soul. "Oh! God protect me, holy angels of God guard and protect me."

Thus a great part of the night was spent in anguish and dreadful alarm, but at last, God sent down a refreshing slumber to the poor boy; and he slept until morning.

CHAPTER III.

ANXIETY AND DELIVERANCE.

POOR Nicholas was much happier, when he awoke and found it was broad day. How beautiful did these red beams of morning now appear to him, as they gilded the brambles over his head in the tower. But soon his joy failed, and he began to weep, "Oh! my good God," he exclaimed, "Thou hast made the beautiful morning. After the dark night, Thou bringest on the day. So canst Thou change sorrow into joy. Oh! put an end to my sorrows, and to those of my dear parents. Restore me to their arms, that we may once more be happy together. Oh! what a happiness, if I could go home, or if they could come here. They would soon relieve me; but Thou canst do it, oh! raise me from this frightful pit."

Thus did poor Nicholas pass the bright morning, now weeping violently—now screaming at the top of his voice and calling for help. All was still and motionless, save when a little bird perched on the old walls, and chirped or sung its cheerful song. But heavily did those gay notes fall on the ear of poor Nicholas. "Ah well may you sing gaily, happy, happy, little birds," said he, "you are free, your wings bear you where you will. Oh! if I had wings how I would soar up, and be at home with my parents. Still, without the will of the great Father in heaven, not one even of you falls to the ground. God knew it, and it is His will that I should fall into this dungeon. He that provides for you, cannot desert me."

So great had been his agitation and grief that up to this moment, he had not thought of eating or drinking. But about noontide, he felt the cravings

of hunger. Fortunately he had some bread and cheese in his pouch. He eat a few morsels, which were indeed moistened with his tears. "This poor stock is soon gone," said he, "and then death, death from starvation! But the good God who feeds the birds will not desert me."

But now he was consumed with a raging thirst. On the preceding evening he had been thirsty. The dry bread, the bitter cheese, and the sultriness of the weather had contributed to aggravate this torment. "Ah, my God," he prayed, "let me not die of thirst: the flowret and the blade of grass, drink the rain and the dew; give me but one drop of water." Completely exhausted, he sank down and rested his aching head on a stone.

"My God," he prayed, "since I am doomed to die here, and no priest with me—do grant me but one sweet sleep, and let me awake to Thee in heaven: but oh! console my father, my dear mother, and little Theckla."

CHAPTER IV.

NEW TERRORS.

STRETCHED in that position, Nicholas fell into a slumber, which lasted till near evening; when frightful peals of thunder startled him from his rest. The air was darkened. Huge piles of gloomy clouds rolled heavily above, and made the sky almost black as night. A violent storm howled and moaned through the ruined tower, sweeping down with a tremendous crash, loose stones and rubbish from the battlements. The trembling child could not count one moment on his life, every instant he thought the vaulted roof would

fall in, and bury him beneath its ruins. He crouched into the farthest corner of his dungeon. Flashes of lightning glared incessantly, and wrapt the whole ruin in flames, while peal after peal, of the clattering thunder, made the earth rock under his feet.

Nicholas raised up his hands to heaven, and prayed fervently. Heavy rain began to fall, and perceiving by the glare of the lightning that the leaves of the brambles were dripping with rain, he cried out in ecstasy. "Oh! my God, how kind Thou art, I prayed but for one drop of water and Thou hast given me thousands. This storm which frightened me so much is the greatest favour I could receive. All Thy ways are goodness itself."

He soon quenched his thirst with the large drops of rain on the weeds and brambles. The weather soon began to clear up; the lightning was still vivid and frequent, but the thunder was fainter and more distant.

Once more he felt his confidence revive, and he placed his firm trust in God. "Oh! grant," he prayed, "that my father may find me here. He has no notion that I am here. Oh! may some angel whisper it into his ear this night in a dream. Then will he rise at once, and come to raise me from this pit."

The rain had now ceased. The thunder was no longer heard; but flashes of lightning still occasionally broke over the castle—then again all was dark and still as death. Suddenly the blood froze in poor Nicholas' veins; he heard something trailing around the edge of the broken roof, and could distinctly hear the clanking of chains. The lightning flashed and he saw the dreadful visitor looking down at him. "Oh! God, what can that be," said he, "a ghost, a ghost, I fear." His former fears were a paradise compared to his present feelings.

It disappeared—the clanking of the chain ceased—but soon after he heard a wailing and scraping against the bottom of the wall on which he was sitting. He started up in terror and rushed to the opposite corner of the dungeon; but the unknown and terrible visitant came up out of the ground, and rushing forward, sprung on Nicholas. Scream after scream of deadly horror burst from the poor boy—a flash of lightning revealed the ghost—it was his faithful fox.

Nicholas' terror was now changed into joy. The fox fawned on him, and licked his feet; and then frisked and bounded around the dungeon. "Oh! my poor brute," said Nicholas, "so you are the terrible ghost; a thousand times welcome," said he, patting the poor animal, "you didn't forget that I once saved you from your stone prison, and you come now to save me, if you could, from this frightful pit—but what's this you have got on your neck? Is it a piece of a chain: is this the collar the smith put on you? Ah! you have escaped from your prison; but I am in prison still: however, I hope that under God, you may be the means of rescuing me from my chains, they are not iron, but they hold me as fast. No doubt you have been sent to release me."

This meeting of an old acquaintance, cheered the poor boy's heart; his fears vanished. He searched for a dry spot in the vault, sat down on a stone, and the fox lay at his feet.

CHAPTER V.

DELIVERANCE FROM THE DUNGEON.

WHEN morning dawned, Nicholas began to say to himself, "I must see how the fox came in here, perhaps I could go out the same way." He remarked a small opening in the floor of the vault, which had been closed up with the fallen stones, before the fox worked himself through it. Nicholas cleared away the stones, and discovered an underground passage. He pressed himself into it, and groped his way in utter darkness so long, that he feared he should never find the end. At last, he found himself in broad day-light, on the side of the mountain.

Who can say how he felt, when he issued from that deep darkness, and found himself free, and beheld the golden clouds of morning and the rising sun, and the green hills freshened by the preceding night's rain, herbs, leaves and flowers glistening with dew-drops. He felt as if he were rising out of the grave. "O Thou kind and ever good Father in heaven," he cried, falling on his knees, "Thou hast saved me. To Thee I offer my most heartfelt thanks. True, true, it is, that Thou dost never abandon those who place their trust in thee. Thanks, thanks, eternal thanks to Thee."

Then rising from his knees, he ran as rapidly as he was able, to his beloved parents. The fox frisked after him gaily.

There had been great woe in his father's house. When the goats returned that evening without their master, gloomy forebodings forced themselves on the anxious fireside. Father, mother, and sister, spent the greater part of that night and the fol-

lowing day, searching for Nicholas, but in vain. To look for him in the old castle, never came into their heads, as his father had strictly forbidden him to go there. They supposed he must have fallen down some precipice, or been swept away in the torrent.

As all three were sitting sorrowfully this morning at home, speaking of nothing but the mysterious fate of Nicholas, whom they now mourned as dead—he raised the latch, and stood before them safe and sound. All burst into a loud and joyful welcome. “O Lord,” cried the father, “Nicky, is it you—or is it your ghost?”

“Oh, Nicky, Nicky,” said the mother, clasping him in her arms, “we gave you up for lost. Ah!” said she, while her tears flowed down on her son, “what pain you have given to us. What happened to you?”

The little sister, too, whose eyes were red with weeping, embraced him fondly.

When the first transports of joy were over, “Tell us, Nicholas,” said the father, “why you have remained so long away: some misfortune must have befallen you.” But his mother said, “Don’t, Nicholas, tell your story, until I have given you a good warm breakfast.” The affectionate mother soon had the breakfast ready; Nicholas sat down, and while he was eating, the three sat around him to listen to his story. The fox, too, was sitting with his face turned up to Nicholas, and his eye constantly fixed on him—not to hear the story, but to get his share of the breakfast.

CHAPTER VI.

A FATHER'S ADVICE—GRATITUDE TO GOD.

NICHOLAS told how the floor, in the old tower, had given way under his feet, and thrown him into the vault, and how he wept and screamed, and was dying of hunger and thirst, and in the most horrible agony. The mother and daughter had often to wipe away the tears during this narrative.

"Ah," said the mother, "misery makes us pray—and does not the scripture say, 'Thus saith the Lord—call on me in your necessities, and I will deliver you.'"

When Nicholas told of the hideous howlings, and the black, flitting phantoms, "Oh stop," cried Theckla. "I'm trembling all over: I would have dropped dead on the spot."

"Oh," said the father, "don't be so simple; they were owls—nothing else. Go on, Nicholas."

Nicholas told how the faithful fox made his appearance in the middle of the terrible storm. "I think," he said, "the fox wished to deliver me from my prison, as I once delivered him."

"The fox did not intend any such thing, Nicholas," said the father. "Still, this much is certain, that though the fox is a poor brute that has no sense, he loved his old master, and was able to track you to the vault. In this light it is good—many a man that feels no gratitude for favours, might take a lesson from the fox."

Nicholas then told how he made his way by that long passage, through which the fox had entered. "So," said he, laying down some bread and milk to the fox, "this good fellow was the cause of setting me free,"

"It was God that freed you," said his mother. "Thank Him—none of us can thank Him as fully as we ought. True, God has made use of this poor animal to deliver you. It was so arranged, that when he broke his chain, he should find you out in your dungeon. "Yes—since you once saved the poor animal, it was the will of Providence, that he should save you. If you, like so many other cruel boys, had killed the fox, you might have starved in that hole in the earth. Was I not right, when I often told you not to be cruel to anything that breathes?"

"And if," said the father, "an irrational brute can be of such service to man, how much more can one man help another. Never be cruel or unkind to any man. It is not only a sin against God and man, but it is often a grievous injury to yourself. It has happened more than once, that a poor beggar saved the life of a prince. Let us therefore, not from selfishness, but from pure and generous motives, be kind to all God's creatures—especially to man—the noblest creature on earth."

The father then advised Nicholas gravely—but very affectionately. "I often warned you," he said, "not to go near that old castle, lest some accident might befall you. I gave you strict orders not to go there. You have slighted my warning—you have disobeyed my orders. See, now, what a wicked thing it is—to disobey a father's orders. Your disobedience plunged you in that vault, and had nearly cost you your life. Many a misfortune disobedience has brought down on children. They broke their necks or their bones, or were drowned, or, like you, fell into pits. But the worst pit of all is the pit of sin, into which disobedience draws us. Many disobedient children have been lost, not only in this world, but in the next. Be ye, therefore, my children, always obedient to your

parents, that it may be well with you. Remember the fourth commandment, 'honour thy father and mother, that thy days may be long, and thy end happy.'"

Next day the smith came to bring home a load of charcoal. "Ha!" said he, when he saw the fox, "I thought I should find him here. I have a strong, new chain, with me now, which he cannot break. Nicholas, I have not paid you yet for the fox. Here, instead of my promised present, I give you a glittering crown."

"No, no," said Nicholas, "not for a thousand crowns." He then told how the fox had saved his life.

"Here, then," said the smith, "is the chain, as well as the crown. Take it as a present; for unless your mother wish to lose all her hens and fowl, the fox must be chained."

Next Sunday morning, in the chapel, the little family returned heartfelt thanks to God, for his great mercy; in the evening they went to the old castle, to perform the same pious duty: besides, they were naturally curious to see where Nicholas had fallen down.

When they had ascended the hill, and come to the castle gate, the father said, "Let me go first, and you can follow, lest any accident should happen." He then entered the door, and looked around him to be certain that there was some solid ground to stand on. Having discovered a firm stone on which two persons could stand, he called in his wife and daughter, one after another. The mother shuddered when she looked down into the deep, black vault. "O Lord," she cried, "what a horrible place: can we ever praise God enough for having saved Nicholas—truly—He lets us fall into the pit, and draws us out again."

"Yes, He does," continued the father. "to ad

monish us of our faults and errors, to punish our levity, and to exercise us in patience and confidence in Him. Nicholas has experienced this. God grant that every man who falls into misery, may, in the end, be able to sing with David, 'that though the Lord had brought him into great trials, He had consoled and saved him in the end.'"

THE DIAMOND RING:

A TALE, IN TWELVE LETTERS.

LETTER I.

JOHN, A SHEPHERD BOY, TO HIS SISTER,
MARIA.

May 1, 1806.

DEAR SISTER,

YESTERDAY evening was beautiful. I was sitting under a tree, playing on my shepherd's flute. My sheep were grazing quietly on the banks of the stream. My little book, which I used in school, was lying near me. The sun was going down, reddening the earth and sky with his golden rays.

Our good curate passed by on his usual walk along the bank of the stream. He stopped for some time to listen to me. He then approached. When he saw the book lying near me, he asked me in a very kind tone, whether I could read. "Oh, yes," said I, and I did read a page for him without stop or stammer.

He appeared somewhat surprised, and asked me, "Where did you come from? Who are these good parents, that had you so well taught? And why did you come to our village?"

I told him our whole history: how we lost all we had, and were driven from our home by the war; how our dear father was killed in battle. I

told him also that my mother was lying sick in a poor hut in Tannenberg, about six leagues from this, and that you, my dear sister, were attending on her, and endeavouring to support her by spinning; and that I, in order to help you, had come here as a shepherd boy, to Wiesenthal. I wept while I was telling these facts.

He spoke to me in a cheering tone. "Be comforted," said he, "and don't cry. Be as pious and honest as your good parents, and you will most certainly have your reward in the end." He put his hand in his pocket, and gave me the new silver coin which I enclose to you now, with the best wishes for my poor mother. God grant that she may soon recover.

Farewell, I remain your affectionate brother,

JOHN.

LETTER II.

MARIA, TO HER BROTHER JOHN.

Tannenberg, May 15, 1806.

DEAR BROTHER,

OH! I am in the greatest affliction. My first letter to you is the most sorrowful I ever wrote. Our dear mother died the night before last, and is to be buried this morning.

The evening before her death, I was sitting by her bedside. Your letter came. I read it for her. She wept with joy.

"Dearest daughter," said she, "I will never rise from this sick bed. I am going to God, our good Father, who is in heaven. My chief consolation on this bed of death is, that I have given you a good education. Oh! my dear children, be always good

and pious ; advance every day in prudence and piety. Have God always before your eyes ; love Him above all ; keep His commandments, and hope in Him. Believe with your whole heart in Jesus Christ, do all that He orders us, and follow His good example. Pray every day, that the Holy Spirit of God may enlighten and direct you, and be ever obedient to His inspirations. Love one another. Do injury to no man. Let no poverty or distress ever induce you to take the least fraction of another's property. Fly even the slightest stain of sin ; preserve your innocence pure and stainless. Then will God assuredly provide for you. He will now be to you as a mother, as he has hitherto been a father. Farewell. Don't cry. I am going to God, and I will pray fervently for you. These are the last words of your dying mother. Don't forget them, dear Maria ; write them to my dear John, also. I send him my dying blessing. I wish I could see him once more in this world. But we shall all meet once more in heaven, where I expect soon to see your dear father."

She then gave both of us a mother's blessing, and about three hours after departed quietly and without a struggle. My own tears are still flowing fast.

I could not tell what pains our good priest took to prepare her for death, and how kind and generous he was in relieving all her wants. He visited her every day, and every day sent her the best nourishment. He called in the doctor, and paid the apothecary's bill. He was at her side when she was expiring, and by his sweet and consoling words, made her passage easy. Pray, dear brother, that God may reward the good priest.

Pray for me, too, for I am now, indeed, a poor helpless girl. Both of us are houseless orphans,

but you are so big and strong, that you can earn your bread by tending sheep. But what can I do? I am not able to work, and I am afraid and ashamed to beg. Begging is often the ruin of innocence. May God pity your poor sister,

MARIA.

LETTER III.

JOHN TO HIS SISTER MARIA.

Wiesenthal, June 2, 1836.

DEAR SISTER,

You were right; God will have pity on us. I am still weeping so bitterly, that I can hardly write to you. No words can tell the shock your letter gave me. Oh! who could ever imagine, that our dear mother would die so soon. But we must bear it patiently; remember, whatever God does, He does for the best. That we must firmly believe, however severe the stroke may be.

Our dear mother is happy now. We have good grounds to hope so. She was so pious, she is certainly in heaven. She is better off than we are. Should we not endeavour to rejoice for her sake? God will provide for us also. He feeds the birds of the air, and clothes the flowers of the field. God sends the warm wind to the shorn lamb, the priest says. He will send help and consolation to us also in our need.

Weep no more, dear sister. Let us place our firm hopes in God, and pray to Him, and follow the advice of our good mother; then will God assuredly protect us, and bring us securely to our parents in heaven.

I inclose a letter, which you will give to the priest. Farewell. God be with you and your brother,

JOHN.

LETTER IV.

JOHN TO THE PARISH PRIEST OF TANNENBERG.

REVEREND AND VENERABLE SIR,

Do not be offended, if a poor orphan boy presume to write to you. It is true, I am only a poor shepherd boy, but I love all my little sheep. I would willingly give them part of my food ; I pity them when anything hurts them, and I carefully pluck out the thorns that stick in their feet. But the lambs are my greatest care.

Pardon me for speaking so boldly to you. You, too, are a shepherd. You love the little sheep, which the Great Shepherd has entrusted to your care. You love them more than I love mine, and this is what emboldens me to speak confidently and like a child to you.

Yes, you love your parishioners. You have proved that at my mother's death. You have attended her as carefully, as if she were your own mother. This fills my heart with gratitude : and as my father and mother have often taught me that gratitude, especially in children, is one of the noblest virtues, I venture now to express my gratitude to you. Indeed, I feel how utterly unable I am to express the sentiments of my heart, but believe me that my heart is full enough. I pray every day for you, that God may richly reward you—and assuredly He will do so.

Pardon me for now closing this letter with a little petition. My sister is now a poor abandoned girl. I am older than she. I am bound to provide for her ; but, alas ! my God, I am poorer than the poor. I have wept and prayed to God heartily, that He would deign to direct me. The thought

struck me, that if I wrote to you, you might receive her. Oh! I beg of you, for God's sake, and from the bottom of my heart, take pity on that poor abandoned orphan. In the firm hope that you will do so, I present you my humble respects, and remain, with filial reverence, your grateful parishioner,

JOHN MULLER.

Wiesenthal, June 2, 1806.

LETTER V.

MARIA TO HER BROTHER JOHN.

Tannenberg, June 15, 1806.

DEAR BROTHER,

How can I thank you for your love? Your letter to our parish priest has made my fortune.

I put on my best clothes, which, though very poor, were clean, and carried the letter to the priest before breakfast. He was in the garden reading a book. I saluted him respectfully, and presenting the letter, said, "This is to your Reverence from my brother." He closed the book and opened the letter. I perceived immediately that he was pleased. He often smiled while he was reading it. "That's good—very good, from your brother," said he, when he had finished it. He asked me did I often write to you. I gave him your two letters. He read them, and said kindly, "You are good children. Your parents have conferred a great blessing on you, by giving you so good an education. It is worth more to you than a thousand guineas. I must devise some plan for relieving you. Go, my good child, I will send for you at another time." I saluted him respectfully again, and retired.

On the evening of the same day, the old servant of the lord of the manor came to me, and told me to come to the castle. I went with him. He told me as we were on the way, how I was to conduct myself, and then brought me into a grand room. The lord and lady were sitting at the table. The priest was with them. I made a low bow to the lord and the priest, and kissed the lady's hand. She gave me a gracious smile, and told me, that she wanted a children's maid, and would take me if I consented.

"O kind lady!" I exclaimed; the tears came to my eyes and I could say no more, but she saw clearly that I was deeply affected, and highly delighted with the offer.

"Stay with me now," she said, "and if you conduct yourself well, I will certainly provide for you."

I kissed her hand again. My tears fell down on it. "These are the best thanks," said she, "henceforth be my daughter."

Since that time I am in the castle. The good lady is kind and gracious as an angel. She had a full new dress made for me immediately. The little lady, entrusted to my care, is a lovely, beautiful child. She is beginning to speak now, and makes me happy by her lisplings. Happy girl that I am, to have charge of her. In short, I am as joyful and content, almost as if I were in heaven.

The first moment I found myself alone, in my small neat bed-room, I fell upon my knees and thanked God heartily, and with many tears, for his kind interference. Oh, indeed, it is true, that whoever loves God, and hopes in Him, will be happy at last. Rejoice with me, dear brother, God will provide for you, as well as for your affectionate sister,

MARIA.

LETTER VI.

JOHN TO HIS SISTER MARIA.

Wiesenthal, July 3, 1803.

DEAR SISTER,

It is impossible to describe the happiness your letter gave me. God visibly is taking care of us. That is an additional reason why we should love, obey, and trust in Him, the good Father of the homeless orphan. True, we do not see Him: but we see clearly that He governs this world. I often said to myself, "Oh, our dear mother, if you were alive now"—but no. I reflect if she were alive this would not have happened. Do you not see, dear sister, how God does all things for the best? He has given heaven to her, and a good place to you. Here she had bitter days, but now she has joy everlasting. She could not be of much use to you here, but now you have gotten another mother.

Observe, too, what an advantage it is to have got some sort of education. If we had not learned to read and write, if our parents had not taught us good principles, we never could have had this good fortune. A poor child like you, would not be so soon taken out of the streets. God be praised, that my father and mother taught us to place our confidence not in gold and wealth, but in God, and industry and virtue. The enemy robbed us of all our goods and money; but man can never take away piety, and virtue, and industry, and intelligence. Therefore these are the only true and real goods of man.

I feel my confidence in God stronger and more tender than ever. My only care is to do His holy will. Do you likewise, dear sister. He will provide for the rest.

Daily pray for the grace of God to perform faithfully the duties of the new state which He has imposed on you. The care of children is a charge of great importance—a perpetual worship of God; for Christ our Lord said, “Whoever receives one such little one in My name, receives Me.” Farewell. I remain your faithful brother,

JOHN.

LETTER VII.

JOHN TO THE PARISH PRIEST OF TANNENBERG.

REVEREND AND VENERABLE SIR,

My heart tells me that I ought to write to you, and thank you. But I fear that I cannot find words to express my feelings. You have saved my dear sister from the greatest misery. You have placed her in a comfortable situation. God saw my gratitude, and hears my fervent prayers for your welfare. He who rewards the glass of water given to the thirsty, will not allow such a good work to go without its reward. He that heareth the cry of the young raven, will not close his ears to the prayer of a poor shepherd boy.

I would willingly write to the good lady, but I have not the courage. Will you, Reverend Sir, thank her for me? You have so favourably answered my petition, you can also take the best means of expressing my thanks. Tell her, that though I have not the honour of knowing her, I feel towards her, the most sincere and tender respect. Truly, I am in her regard, as I am with God. We can love Him, though we do not see Him. When the sun is rising, I pray that it may shine bright and serene over her, and when the evening star glimmers in the heavens, I pray that it may bring her peace and rest.

The man that brought my sister's letter told me, that the young lords in the castle are very fond of pretty butterflies. While I am here I have time to catch many of them. I send one of them to you. The good curate told me how to shut them up in this glass case, and to feed them. At present I cannot send any other acknowledgment of my gratitude. But we should always endeavour to make others as happy as we can; and if the beautiful colours of these summer birds, teach the young lords to admire the almighty power and goodness of God, my present is not without some fruit.

I remain, with profound respect, your obedient, grateful parishioner,

JOHN MULLER.

Wiesenthal, July 3, 1806.

LETTER VIII.

JOHN TO HIS SISTER MARIA.

Wiesenthal, August 20, 1806.

DEAR SISTER,

I HAVE had my own good fortune. I was tending my sheep the other day near the stream. As I love to contemplate the wisdom and goodness of God, even in the smallest of His creatures, I began to search along the bank for the little snails and shells. I saw something shining very bright in the grass. It was a gold ring, set with many precious stones. I concluded at once that it must be very valuable, and I actually jumped for joy.

Two Jews were passing by at the moment. I showed them the ring. "Oh!" said one of them, "the thing is of some value, but it is worth nothing to you. See, I will give you six shillings for it."

"I cannot give the ring," I said; "I think some person must have lost it, and I am bound to restore it. It would be a sin to sell it."

"Yes," said he; "but you do not know to whom it belongs. I will give you a great thaler for it. Look here," he continued, showing to me at the same time a glittering thaler, "here take it."

I shook my head—"No, no," said I, "for a thousand such thalers, I would not commit that sin."

The other Jew, who was an old gray-headed man, with a long beard, said to me. "You are an honest boy. I am an honest Jew. Keep the ring, and make diligent inquiry after the owner. If you cannot find him, the ring is yours. You then can go to that little village yonder, where you see the church spire, and inquire for old Samuel. If you bring the ring to me, I will give you one hundred thalers for it, for that is its value."

So, you see, there are different kinds of people among Jews, as well as among Christians. On that very evening I went to the curate and told him the whole matter. The ring, he told me, was lost by a cavalry officer, who had been lately duck-hunting there. Ten thalers reward are promised to the finder. Leave the ring here, and write a letter. I will have both forwarded to the officer. He is one of the noblest souls in the world. That ring makes your fortune.

For my own part, I am inclined to hope, that it was not without a favourable design that God threw the ring in my way. I am, dear sister, your faithful brother,

JOHN.

LETTER IX.

JOHN TO CAPTAIN VON BRAY.

NOBLE AND GRACIOUS CAPTAIN,

A POOR shepherd boy takes the liberty of writing to you. I was happy enough to find your lost ring. I am still more happy in now restoring it. This, I hope, will secure pardon for my intrusion.

You had the goodness to promise ten thalers to the finder. Your generosity emboldens me to make another request. My parents lost all in the war. Both are dead. Poverty compels me to be a poor shepherd boy. I bear my lot with patience; but I am afraid of the future. I wish, above all things, to be a carpenter, and to commence my apprenticeship now. I humbly petition your honour to assist me.

God will assuredly reward you, for conferring such a great favour on a poor orphan boy; and that ring with its fair and glittering pearls, will be still more dear to you, as it will remind you of a generous act, and the tears of gratitude which will be poured out by your honour's obedient, humble servant,

JOHN MULLER.

Wiesenthal, August 21, 1806.

LETTER X.

MARIA TO HER BROTHER JOHN.

Tannenberg, August 30, 1806.

DEAR BROTHER,

ANOTHER great joy. God does, indeed, take pleasure in making those happy, that place their hopes in Him.

My lady's brother, a cavalry officer, has been here for the last eight days. Yesterday evening I was sitting with the noble family, under the lime tree opposite to the castle gate. The two gentlemen were smoking their cigars. I was standing near, with the little baby in my arms. A messenger came up with a letter to the officer. He laid down his cigar, and when he opened the letter, he exclaimed: "My lost ring returned! oh, what a happiness!" He then began to read the letter: "Noble and gracious captain, a poor shepherd boy

"Ah," I said aloud, "that's from my brother."

The captain read the letter. "Brother," said the lady, "God has appointed us the parents of these poor children. I have taken the girl, you must take the boy."

"Ah, your honour," I added, "do take pity on the poor orphans."

"What pity," he exclaimed hastily, "pity? the good boy has a right to protection. He must have his wish."

"We have an excellent carpenter here in our village," said my master, "he has no children. Let us bind the boy apprentice to him. The orphans can then be together, and we will have one honest man more in the village."

The carpenter was sent for, and all was arranged. I asked whether I might be allowed to send this news to you. "Certainly," was the order, "write to him to come—and the sooner the better."

So come quickly, dear brother. With happiness indescribable, and tears of heartfelt gratitude to that good Father in heaven, who has made both of us so happy, you will be met by your sister,

MARIA.

LETTER XI.

CAPTAIN VON BRAV TO HIS SISTER,
LADY TANNENBERG.

Waldan, November 18, 1805.

DEAR SISTER,

I HASTEN to impart to you some very agreeable news, which must give the highest gratification to our adopted children, John and Mary.

The largest diamond in the centre of my ring happening to be loose, I brought it to the goldsmith's to fasten it. The goldsmith was sitting at his work table, and merely nodding his head when he saw me, he worked busily at a gold box which he had in hands. In a distant corner of the same room, there was an elderly man sitting at a table. He was very poorly clad, but his appearance and figure were noble and intelligent. A glass of beer and a piece of bread were lying before him. When I entered, he rose and bowed, and remained standing for some time, like a soldier in presence of his officer.

"You must have seen service," said I to him.

"Several years," he answered: "my small pension is not enough to support me and I am obliged to turn wood cutter. This kind goldsmith gave me this bread and beer besides my pay, for bringing some wood to him." I gave the old soldier some money, which pleased him highly.

I then showed my ring to the goldsmith. "Ha," said he, "it's well you have not lost that diamond."

"Then," said I, "I had once the misfortune to lose the ring itself—diamonds and all. But John Muller, an honest little boy, who was expelled from his home during the war, found the ring and restored it."

Clara with flattery, He had never been so liberal with soft words and compliments, and though all that he said did not please her, his flattery was far from being displeasing. His fine person, his wit and eloquence, threw all his failings into the shade in the eyes of the inexperienced Clara. Young Edward was now her only thought. She imagined that the young gentleman would marry her. She began to be more scrupulously attentive to her dress, visited her new friends more frequently, and so neglected her true and affectionate friend, Julia, that she scarcely ever paid her a visit.

CHAPTER VIII.

MADAM VON HUGEL.

MADAM von Hügel observed with sorrow, that Clara frequented that house. She trembled for Clara's innocence, honour, and happiness; she knew that the reputation of the two ladies (whose mother was dead) did not stand very high, and especially that their brother, though he conducted himself with such apparent propriety, was really a profligate young man, and a very improper companion for a young person.

The sisters were aware of their brother's profligacy, but made no attempt to check it, so long as he overlooked, or even openly made matter of sport of their own levity. Old Mr. von Winnig was a very good man in his own way, but he was completely blind to the faults of his children. He sat over his books the whole day, counting his gold, and went in the evening to enjoy his glass of wine and his game of cards, and read the news-

papers with his friends, leaving matters at home to go on as they might. His house was, every evening, a meeting place for large parties of gay young persons, who spent their time in dancing, singing, and all sorts of amusements.

Good Madam von Hügel warned Clara of her danger, with great candour and affection. "My dearest Clara," she would say, "you can never be happy unless you remain as virtuous and innocent as you are beautiful. A fair form is a gift of God, and we should thank Him for it. Still, it is but a frail and a very dangerous gift. Your beauty, you consider your richest treasure;—take care that it be not your most deadly ruin. Your dress, too, is very elegant. Dress ought to be attended to—it should be neat and clean; but to dress beyond our means and rank of life is not praiseworthy, but censurable, and exposes a young woman to the contempt of sensible men. She that listens to every flatterer, will in the end be despised by all. A young woman who has no other recommendation but her beauty, gaiety, and dress, may do very well for a dance, but no sensible man would think of leading her to the altar. To fear God, to live piously and industriously—to be modest and retired—makes a girl agreeable to God and man, and adorns her more than gold and pearls. God watches over and provides for her, and gives her innumerable blessings. Here, as in everything else, it is true to say, that 'piety is ever profitable, and has a promise both for this world and the next.'

"But levity and love of vain amusements and pleasure, injure both body and soul, and plunge us in temporal and eternal ruin. You have two ways before you—one which, though rough in the beginning, leads to happiness—another, which appears strewn with flowers, but leads to perdition.

promise of the Sunday visit. They both then sang many songs, several of which were sacred; and Julia, from her small but select library, read several books which happily combined entertainment and instruction. Clara listened to them with delight, for she had a soul sensitively alive to whatever was beautiful and good. When she heard a pathetic passage, the tears gushed to her eyes; and when she heard a humorous one, it struck her fancy at once, and called up the merry laugh from the bottom of her heart.

In order to enjoy more of Clara's company, Julia requested her mother to give her some employment in the house; her mother complied, and Clara and Julia thus often spent three or four days together. These days flew rapidly, for whether at table or at work, the mother had many agreeable and instructive stories to relate. Clara was overjoyed at having this excellent opportunity of improving herself by the conversation of such a prudent and virtuous woman, and of her amiable daughter. She never left them without finding herself improved and confirmed in her good purposes. Her aunt, also, was charmed on finding that her niece never came home to her without having something agreeable to tell. After some time, Clara went every evening, and at all her leisure hours, and always remained with Julia until the lamps were lighted; and she thanked God for giving her so true and worthy a friend. By degrees she was consoled for her father's death, and recovered her usual sprightliness.

CHAPTER VII.

YOUNG MR. VON WINNIG.

CLARA had now reached her eighteenth year. Her uncommon beauty, her affability, her artless demeanour, her gentleness, and the gaiety which sprung from the innocence of her heart and revealed itself in her features, all attracted universal admiration.

One day, two young ladies came into the shop. They were the daughters of Mr. von Winnig, a banker, who had lately obtained a title, and was generally reported to be very wealthy. They did not consider the price of the most costly silks too high for them; but they told Mrs. Burke to set down her own price in their bill, and that they would settle the matter in their yearly accounts; at the same time requesting Mrs. Burke to allow Clara to go home with them for some days, to help them to make the dresses. Mrs. Burke joyfully assented. Next morning when Clara went, she was most kindly received. They sat around the work-table, but the two Miss Winnigs did very little work. Work to them was a mere pastime. They were entirely taken up with retailing all the latest news of the town, which sometimes was not of a very creditable character. They made the wickedness and folly of men the subject of their merriment, and laughed immoderately at their own stories and remarks.

Their brother came in after some time. He was a fine figure, was dressed in the newest fashion, conversed with sprightliness upon every topic, and had something agreeable to say to every one. "What angel is this you have got with you?" said he, as he sat down with them. He overpowered

The old warrior started up, and, approaching me respectfully, asked: "Can your honour give further particulars of that boy? Where is he? has not he a sister? Is his mother living still?"

I told him that I had taken the boy under my protection, and had him apprenticed to a carpenter, that Maria, his sister, was at service with you, that both the children were in good health, but that Helena Muller, their mother, was dead.

"O my God!" the poor soldier exclaimed, while the tears started to his eyes. "They are my children, John and Mary. Oh, how happy I am that they are still alive. But, alas, the death of my beloved and affectionate wife afflicts me deeply."

He then made particular inquiries into all the circumstances of the case. I told him all I knew, "Oh," said he, "all agrees. I am sorry that the poor children suppose me dead. But it is no wonder. After serving for a time in the king's life guard, I was disbanded. When the war broke out, I was again summoned to the field, and was compelled to leave wife and children. I was wounded so severely in battle, that I lay for dead on the field, and was afterwards taken up by the enemy, and detained a prisoner for many years. My native home had, in the mean time, fallen into the hands of the enemy, and my wife and children were compelled to fly. When I was restored to liberty, I made all possible inquiries to find them—but without success. My greatest consolation this moment is, that my wife died so holy and Christian a death. My greatest happiness is, that my children are good and pious, that Maria watched by the death-bed of her mother, that John honestly restored the ring, and that both are in such good health. I cannot express my gratitude to God, for having provided for them so well. I must start this moment to go see them, if I were obliged to

beg the whole way to Tannenberg. I must see them once more, and then let death come whenever it be the will of God."

The brave old soldier spoke with such earnestness and deep emotion, that myself and the goldsmith could not refrain from sharing in his tears. The goldsmith's wife and children, overhearing the loud and passionate tones of the old man, came to listen, and were deeply affected by the tale.

I promised the good old man, that when good weather set in, I would find some means of having him conveyed to Tannenberg, that I would have him well mounted once more, as became so brave an old soldier, and that I would also defray all his travelling expenses.

Now, dear sister, communicate to the good children, in the best way your prudence suggests, the happy news that their father is still alive. I rely on your charity and hospitality, that you will give the old soldier a corner in your castle when he arrives.

Present my kind remembrance to your husband and his dear children. I am, with all my heart, your loving brother,

ADOLPHUS.

LETTER XII.

JOHN TO THE CURATE OF WIESENTHAL.

REVEREND AND RESPECTED SIR,

WHEN I was a shepherd boy in Wiesenthal, you were often very kind to me. It was your good advice when I found the ring, that made that accident the means of having me apprenticed to a carpenter. You have been happy to hear how the good God has so arranged matters, that the ring

should be the occasion of restoring our lost father to myself and my sister Maria. I know you will be also glad to hear now, some news of us and our father.

It is impossible to express our joy on seeing the face of that father whom we had so long mourned as dead. He wondered to find us grown so big: he was delighted that we were so fresh and healthy: but he was still better pleased, when every person spoke well of us.

"All were well, now," said he, "if the mother were alive." We were ordered to conduct him to her grave. There was an oak cross standing over it. I had employed all my skill in making it solid, and fixing it firmly in the earth. The day before my father's arrival, my sister had placed a wreath of flowers around the cross. When he saw the green grave, he burst into tears. All of us wept and prayed for a long time over the grave. "May she rest in peace," said he, at length, "here on earth we have sorrows and afflictions, but if we bear them with patience, and place our hopes in God, there awaits us beyond the grave—an unfading crown."

My father is perfectly content here in Tannenberg. The noble family, the parish priest and my own master were very attentive to him. When he had resided about three weeks with us, he said one day to the lord, "I have been a burden long enough to you, I must now take my staff, and go somewhere else." But the good lord answered, "My wife has taken your daughter into her service; my brother-in-law, the captain, has provided for the son, and I must do something for the father of these two good children. You see that my demesne is very extensive, including large tracts of arable and pasture land; I have observed in your conversation, that you have an excellent knowledge of

farming. I have been long looking for an intelligent man, a man of true honesty and integrity, whom I might set over my household and servants. I think you are the very man that suits me. I have destined that post for you, as you have all the necessary qualifications, and you can, moreover, have a respectable salary. I don't expect that you will work at manual labour in the fields; you are too old for that. All I require is, that you superintend the work, and carefully keep everything in order."

My father gladly accepted the offer, and we were, of course, overjoyed that he was now fixed permanently near us. He entered immediately on his new office. Notwithstanding his advanced age, he was still strong enough to use the scythe, and mow with the men under his direction; in the harvest, too, when he led his reapers into the field, he took his sickle, and was scarcely idle for a single moment, from break of day to a late hour in the evening.

My good master was devotedly attached to my father, they were great friends. When my master was broken down by age, and after the loss of his wife, he resolved to make over his establishment and property on me. "For," said he, "I am convinced that John will supply all my wants, and watch over me, with filial love until my death." Still there was some difficulty in the matter. To become a master, and to acquire the right of citizenship, and to lay in a good store of timber and to meet other payments, one hundred great thalers, at least, would be necessary, and we knew not where we were to get that sum.

We had kept the transaction between my master and myself a profound secret. But yesterday morning, the parish priest sent for me, and paid me down on the table, one hundred great thalers. "Take those, John," said he, "that's a present for you, to enable

left behind her a beautiful muslin gown, which she reserved for the future sports of the day. Julia met her on her way to the church.

"Ah! dear, dear Clara," says Julia, "is it really true that you have changed your mind so soon, and are going to the ball to-day? Oh! do not go, my dear friend! what a terrible calamity, if you should fall a victim to your levity! Your love of these vain amusements must withdraw you from nobler pleasures, which are a foretaste of the joys of heaven. The vile dances which have now made their way from the lowest alehouses into houses of respectability, rob many a young maid of the health of both body and soul. Trust not the *airy** assurances of this light young man; they are like those shining glass pearls set in your hair—not genuine, and very frail. Believe me, Mr. von Winnig will never marry any young woman who has not, at least, as much property as himself; and even though your aunt should leave you her whole house and establishment, you would still be poor in his eyes. His intentions are not honourable—he is amusing himself at your expense. Oh! then, dearest Clara, take warning in time. Go on in your present course, and you run the risk of losing your innocence and honour, and of plunging yourself for the remainder of your days into the utmost wretchedness."

Clara answered sharply. "Edward is not so wicked as you think. He is, on the contrary, the best of men. I have pledged my word to go to the park with him, and I cannot retract.—But we are spending the hour of mass in this conversation, we shall be too late." With these words she retired.

She was very much distracted in the chapel, and could not restrain her imagination. When mass

* There is a *pun* in the original here which it is impossible to translate into English.

was over, she returned in a great hurry to her aunt's, put on her fine new white gown, and her rose-coloured bonnet, and had nothing to do now but to place in her breast the roses which she had received from Mr. von Winnig. She had kept the roses in cold water, in a back room, to preserve them fresh. But when she hurried into the room, and was stretching out her hand to take the flowers, she suddenly stood stock still, like one struck by lightning, and withdrew her outstretched arm in evident terror! Instead of the red roses which she had left there, she found a bunch of white ones!

Now she had not seen a white rose since she last wept over her mother's grave. She knew not whether she was asleep or awake, and so striking was the impression on her senses, that she felt as if she stood once more over her mother's grave. The last admonitions of that dying mother—the words of her departed father beside the grave—the good resolutions which she had then made—all rushed together on her memory at this moment.

"O God!" she exclaimed, "I feel as if I heard the voice of my dear mother crying out to me from the grave—'O Clara! preserve your innocence!' or the solemn words of my father, which he uttered over her grave, and repeated at our last parting: 'O Clara! save your soul!' My kind mother; my dear father! sadly have I neglected your counsels."

She began to weep, and the big tears streamed over her now pallid cheeks.

At this moment, Julia, who had concealed herself unobserved in the next room, entered the apartment.

"Oh! Julia," said Clara, still weeping and throwing her arms around her, "Oh! Julia, you are my good angel. It was you who left the white roses here to warn me. You knew well from the history I gave you, the impression which the white roses would

Choose now which of the two you please ; but, mark my words, you will in the end know the truth of what I say—your own experience will confirm it.”

Julia was present, and the bright tears were trembling in her eyes. She seized Clara’s hand, and exclaimed, “ Oh ! dearest friend, you have so many good qualities, prudence, affection, a good education, and a fair form, it were a pity that any evil should befall you. It would break my heart ! Let us both hearken to the wise warnings of my mother.”

Clara was very much moved, and promised never to forget their true and affectionate advice.

CHAPTER IX.

AN INVITATION TO A BALL.

WHEN Clara came home she was very pensive, and as she sat at her work in the shop, she made a thousand good resolutions. As it was Saturday evening, she rose early from her business, and was preparing to close the shop, but just at that moment, young Mr. von Winnig entered to purchase some gloves for his sisters. “ To-morrow, my fair friend,” said he, “ will be a grand festival. The new ball-room in the English park, about a mile distant from the town, is to be opened. My sisters are going there in the morning after divine service, and request the favour of your company. We dine abroad—then comes the dance, and splendid fireworks in the evening. Of course I could not be absent on such a festive occasion, and you too must promise not to disappoint us on any

account. You will be the brightest ornament—the very Queen of the festival. Allow me to present you with this bouquet of fresh roses, which I have worn on my breast; let it be my pledge, that I shall open the dance with you. The beautiful red rose is the emblem of pleasure, and certainly, my dearest friend, we shall enjoy real pleasure to-morrow.”

Clara took the roses and promised to go. At supper she asked her aunt's permission to take a walk in the morning with the two young Misses Winnig. Her aunt consented with pleasure. The good woman was an excellent judge of silks and millinery, but knew very little about men. As long as the two young ladies gave her their custom, she regarded the common reports about them and their brother as vile slanders. She felt not a little flattered also at the high honour conferred on her dear niece Clara. She had not the least doubt that Mr. von Winnig would marry her beautiful niece. “What doubt can be of the matter?” said she to herself; “did not Miss Winnig's waitingmaid, when she saw me yesterday buying some yards of ribbon, tell me in the greatest confidence, ‘Miss Clara, if she wishes, may soon be my mistress.’”

CHAPTER X.

A STARTLING APPARITION.

THE following morning was fair and cloudless, and promised a beautiful day. Clara rose early and spent a full hour before the looking glass, arranging her dark rich hair, fastening her gaudy necklace of large imitation pearls, and adjusting her new gold earrings. She put on her gay Sunday dress when she was going to mass, but

you take your master's place." I was so astonished that I could not utter a syllable; it was like a dream to me. The parish priest smiled, and explained the matter. The fact was, the cavalry officer had, long ago, resolved that I should succeed my master. Our parish priest had, a few days before, been promoted to a high office in the church, and should, according to custom, wear a diamond ring. "This ring," the officer said to the priest, "is of no use to me. It is dead capital. I don't know, in truth, why I wear it. But there is some reason now, why you should wear it. I present it to you, but on this condition, that you pay down to our young carpenter, John Muller, the sum of one hundred great thalers. That's the value of the ring between friends." The priest was as much surprised with this generosity, as I was, when he counted down the one hundred thalers. But the noble officer merely observed, that whenever we begin a good work, we ought to finish it. John can now take his father and sister into the house, if they cannot get a better place, and thus all three are provided for.

The captain also added. "The ring was what introduced us to the good curate of Wiesenthal, I and my sister and brother-in-law, have a high opinion of him, and my brother-in-law the Lord of Tannenberg, will present him to succeed you in this parish." The priest then took the ring out of its beautiful case, and having put it on his finger, said, with tears in his eyes, and heartfelt emotion, "This ring, I will ever wear in honour of Divine Providence; it shall always remind me that the great God does often employ the most simple and trivial events, to effect the great happiness of many men."

Ever revered sir, I need not inform you how great a happiness it will be, not only to me, my

father and sister, but to all good people here, to have you the guardian of their spiritual interests. With profound respect and heartfelt love, I am your ever grateful,

JOHN MULLER.

Tannenberg, May 17, 1817.

THE END.







